

Dr. Augustus Eliot House  
(Dr. Samuel Eliot House)  
500 Main Street  
Old Saybrook  
Middlesex County  
Connecticut

HABS No. CT-364

HABS  
CONN,  
4-SAYBRO,  
6-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey  
National Park Service  
Department of the Interior  
Washington, D.C. 20240

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

HABS  
CONN  
H-SAYBROOK  
6-

DR. AUGUSTUS ELIOT HOUSE  
(Dr. Samuel Eliot House)

HABS No. CT-364

Location: SDD Main Street, Old Saybrook, Middlesex County,  
Connecticut

Present Owner: Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Ames Thompson

Present Occupants: Mr. and Mrs. Thompson

Present Use: Dwelling

Statement of Significance: This 18th century house was the original one on this site and has always been a family residence. The various owners have had the advantages of above average education and wealth so that the house has never fallen into serious disrepair. Careful maintenance and modernization through the years have allowed its residents to live comfortably while the house has kept its 18th century character.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History

1. Date of erection: c. 1745. For many years the house has been called the Dr. Samuel Eliot House, but it is more likely, according to recent research that the construction was begun under the ownership of his brother, Dr. Augustus Eliot who purchased the land from Samuel Clerk in 1745.
2. Architect: None known
3. Original and subsequent owners:

The Dr. Augustus Eliot House is located at what is now 500 Main Street. This is on the north side of the street which during the 18th century was referred to as the Highway or the Road to Saybrook Point. It is near the spot which was once referred to as the Neck Gate; a low point in the road over which felt water once ran at high tide and an easily defensible point for 17th century residents of Saybrook Point. The following are references to this property:

- 1745 Deed recorded March 5 in Book 6, page 292. Land at the Neck Gate is sold by Samuel Clerk to Augustus Eliot.
- 1749 Probate of Estate, December 4, Volume 4, Guilford, Conn. Probate records, page 543. Distribution of the estate of Dr. Augustus Eliot is made to Mr. Gale, Aeron Eliot, Joseph Eliot, Nathan Eliot, Jared Eliot, John Eliot and George Eliot. The probate inventory listed on pages 454, 455 and 456 of the same volume includes the house and home lot valued at \$ 1037.
- 1749 Deed recorded March 20 in Volume 7, Saybrook Land Records, page 234. Sale of the property to Capt. Samuel Lord from Dr. Eliot's heirs including 13 acres with the building, fences and appurtenances.

- 1749 Deed recorded June 22 in volume 7, Saybrook Land Records, page 244. Sale of the property to Jabez Stow from Capt. Samuel Lord (Stow was Lord's son-in-law) The sale included 8 acres with building, fence and appurtenances, near the Neck, bounded east on Lord's land indicating Lord kept some of the land closer to the Neck.
- 1787 Probate of Estate of Jabez Stow, Sr., October 2, Volume III, Saybrook Probate Records, pages 291, 292, 293 and 294. The dwelling house is mentioned with a value of \$140. 1/3 is distributed to the widow, Annah Stow.
- 1790 Probate of the estate of Jabez Stow the Second, January 7, Volume III, Saybrook Probate Records, pages 301, 302, 303. 2/3 of the dwelling house is mentioned at \$86.
- 1807 Deed recorded October 30, Volume 13, page 445, Saybrook Land Records. Annah Stow conveys to her grandson, Jabez William Newell 3 acres, for love and affection.
- 1809 Probate of Estate of Jabez Stow Senior after the death of his widow, March 7, volume 5, Saybrook Probate Records, pages 40, 41 and 42. The widow's dower is distributed to the heirs of Jabez Stow the Second, deceased (2/3's) and to Mary Newell, wife of David Newell (1/3)
- 1822 Deed November 13, Volume 19, Saybrook Land Records, Page 230. Mary Newell for love and affection transfers all her property to her son Jabez William Newell.
- 1823 Deed, April 25, Book 20, Saybrook Land Records, page 443. Jabez William Newell sells for \$1000. to John Buehnell Second, all land conveyed to him by his mother.
- 1852 Quit Claim Deed, February 13, Volume II, Old Saybrook Land Records, page 93. John Buehnell for \$500, quit-claims 8 acres with his dwelling house and all other buildings to his children: John F. Buehnell, Richard M. Buehnell, Charles E. Buehnell, Henry A. Buehnell, Lavinia Buehnell, Elizabeth Clark, Mary A. Shepherd, Catherine Dennison and Nancy Buehnell.
- 1859 Quit Claim Deed, August 3, Volume III, Old Saybrook Land Records, page 150. 8 Acres with all buildings are transferred for \$5000. to John F. Buehnell, by his brothers and sisters: Lavinia A. Buehnell, William J. Clerk and Elizabeth Clark his wife, Rufus C. Shepherd and Mary Ann Shepherd his wife, Rufus Dennison and Catherine Dennison his wife all of Old Saybrook; Augustus Buehnell and Nancy M. Buehnell his wife of Westbrook; Richard M. Buehnell and Henry A. Buehnell of Santa Rosa County Florida and Charles E. Buehnell of Lancaster Grant County in Wisconsin.

- 1862 Deed, November 19, Volume III, Old Saybrook Land Records page 317. From John F. Buehnell to Richard M. Bushnell for \$5500, including several pieces of which one is 11 acres with the homestead.
- 1890 Deed, June 10, Volume 8, Old Saybrook Land Records, page 550. Sale from Mary Stowe Potter and all heirs (Fannie Sterling Stevens, heirs of Elizabeth Lindsley Menefee, Catherine Bushnell Kellogg, heirs of Richard Morton Bushnell, Frederick Newell Bushnell, Ralph Gaylor Bushnell) to Mrs. Amy Butler of Dorchester, Mass.
- 1901 Deed, July 8, Volume 9, Old Saybrook Land Records page 525. Sale from Amy Butler to Charlotte DuV. Butterfield and William Butterfield.
- 1921 Deed September 27, Volume 18, Old Saybrook Land Records, page 543 from Charlotte DuV. Butterfield to Amy Butler.
- 1921 Deed September 27, Volume 23, Old Saybrook Land Records page 16. From Amy J. Butler to Edward P. Morris.
- 1951 Deed, June 21, Volume 62, Old Saybrook Land Records, Page 1DB. Sale from Ramona Morris, daughter-in-law and heir of Edward P. Morris to Dorothy L. Wyeth.
- 1952 Deed, October 3, Volume 63, Old Saybrook Land Records, pages 290 and 293. Sale from Dorothy L. Wyeth to Robert Childress and Nan H. Childress.
- 1956 Deed, March 14, Volume 71, Old Saybrook Land Records, page 251. Sale from Robert Childress and Nan H. Childress to Harold L. Free and Janet B. Free. The deed states that the Studio building is to be removed by the Grantors.
- 1965 Deed, April 30, Volume 111, Old Saybrook Land Records, page 226. Sale from Janet B. Free to Deboreh S. Kloter.
- 1970 Deed, July 17, Volume 138, Old Saybrook Land Records, page 577. Sale of property by Deboreh S. Kloter to Joseph Ames Thompson and Priscille M. Thompson.
4. Original plans, construction, etc.: No original plans exist but remains of the original structure are sufficient to indicate that the house was built to be similar to its present form; extended two-chimney, center hall, 2½ story wooden colonial house. When the house was built there was a variety of lumber in the area and the local stone pits probably provided material for the foundations. Plaster was used at an early date incorporating lime from the abundant shellfish along the coast. Joiners and other craftsmen lived in Saybrook and it is reasonable to assume that construction was based on references to published builders' guides and other structures along the shoreline.

5. Alterations and additions:

A great deal of work has been done on the Augustus Eliot House during its lifetime of more than two centuries. However, most of it has been in the nature of repairs and replacement of worn-out materials. Modernization has been done to keep the house at an acceptable living standard through various eras without endangering the basic character of the structure.

The general appearance of the exterior is unquestionably 18th century. The present ell on the north is a 20th century addition although a map of 1874 shows the house with an ell. The porch on the east was added in the 1950's and an earlier 20th century photo shows a one-bay porch there similar to the one now on the front. The first floor bathroom and its walls were also added in the 1950's. A small window was added on each side wall when bathrooms were installed in this century and a large kitchen window replaced the original one in the 1950's. The exterior facade has always had the present symmetrical five-bay arrangement but the present door and sidelights were probably an early alteration. The present front porch and sandstone steps are not original and it cannot be certain when they were added. The electrical wiring and tongue and groove boarding under the porch roof are 20th century work, but the sandstone may have come down the Connecticut River from Portland, Conn. in the early 19th century when it was a popular building material.

Many clapboards have been replaced through the years but some riven ones still remain and they are probably original. In 1969 louvered blinds had been nailed to the window frames and the present owners removed these. Pintles from some indefinite earlier date still remain. The original exterior color is unknown. During the 20th Century the house was painted a pale yellow with white trim. The present owners chose the blue color now on the house as one of several appropriate colors used in mid-18th Century America. This particular is based on a color used in Newport, R.I. With the proper wind that city is only a few hours from Saybrook by sailing ship. With easy contact between the two places they must have had access to the same materials.

Dr. Augustus Eliot died in 1747 and his probate inventory included the following items:

2 thousand boards  
1½ white pine ditto  
1650 of 8 penny nails  
1000 of 4 penny ditto  
white lead 42 lbs.  
20 ... Spanish white  
1 box of glass  
1 gal. oil (oil)  
The house and home lot ... rufe & boards

The fact that Dr. Eliot had these materials on hand probably indicates that the house had not been completed. When the property was sold to Captain Lord by the Eliot estate in 1749 the deed did include a building.

We can assume that Jabez Stow, Sr. finished the house after he purchased the property from his father-in-law, Captain Lord.

When Jabez Stow, Sr. died in 1785, the widow's share of his estate included the southwest room and chamber above it, and mentions items in other rooms in such a way as to indicate that the house had the same shape then as it does now.

An account book of Jabez Stow, Sr. lists items for which he has made payment, in some cases apparently for his son, Jabez, Jr. In 1782 a purchase of chestnut posts and 10 squares of glass was made. In the same year cash was paid to Wm. Kirtland and Timothy Pratt for work on the house and to purchase 4000 lath nails, pine boards, 8 penny nails and laths. In 1783 cash was paid to Mr. White for mending lath. Since Saybrook was not the scene of any Revolutionary War battles the house would not have been damaged during the war. Shortly after the war there was a period of prosperity with increased commercial shipping and a considerable amount of decorative "improvement" appears to have been done around the end of the 18th century. Perhaps that is why the above purchases were made.

In connection with settling the estate of Jabez Stow, Sr, notation is made of payments by Jabez, Sr. for:

- 216 squares of sashes at 13. per square
- 30 squares of glass
- 9 window frames
- 800 feet of clapboard
- 5 qts. linseed oil
- 81 meals of vittala for joiners
- Cash to Capt. Samuel Shipman for work on house
- 15 lb. nails
- 200 3-panny brads
- 4 lb. white lead
- 19 lb. Spanish white
- 295 ft. pine boards
- 125 brads
- 9 ft. pine planks  
for setting boards and clapboards

Jabez Stow, Jr. was lost at sea in 1788, three years after his father's death. When Annah, the widow of Jabez, Sr. died in 1808, the property is referred to as "improved by the widow". Her daughter, Mary Stow had married Capt. David Newell in 1784 and we know that the Newell's lived in the house. It is reasonable to assume that they were living there from the time of the deaths of Jabez, Sr. and Jabez, Jr.

All of the above, plus the fact that the name Isaac Potts (owner of the forge at Valley Forge) and the date 1795 appear on the fire frame in the southeast room indicate that much decorative work was done at about that time. This would include woodwork around the fireplace openings, dentil work and cornices and doors and trim, and the fire frame on the first floor. Probably the archway over the stairway was added then, too. Much of the reproduction hardware on these newer doors was installed before a layer of light blue paint, apparently in the 1920's or 30's.

The distribution of Jabez Stow Sr.'s estate after the death of his widow refers to the improvement of the kitchen. Saybrook residents now living recall that the kitchen was in the ell during the 1920's and that the ell was "quite new" at that time. Indications of chair rail and baseboard in the present kitchen indicate that the room was not originally a kitchen. We assume that the kitchen ell was added by Jabez Stow, Sr., was later demolished, and was rebuilt in the early 20th century as a kitchen and was more recently turned into its present use as a garage.

A cement floor was put in the basement early in the 20th century and central heating, electricity and plumbing were installed. There is evidence of a stovepipe above the mantel in the second floor southwest chamber, this probably being the first modern heating improvement. The hot water heating system now used replaced an earlier steam heating system in the 1940's or 50's. The chimney flue goes through the fireplace in the northwest room making it necessary to close that fireplace and the one in the original chamber above it.

A photograph of the house taken in 1938 just after an unusually bad hurricane, shows a large tree which has fallen into the southeast corner of the house going through the roof and the upstairs southeast chamber. Inside the attic one can see where the roof end and wall have been replaced. Parts of the southeast chamber window end wall have also been replaced.

In the 1950's excellent structural work was done. Steel beams were installed in the basement and all the sills were replaced. New bathrooms were added and a bar was added in a closet beside the fireplace in the northeast room. The northwest room was remodeled into a very modern kitchen with built-in appliances and many cupboards.

Some boards have been brought from the attic floor to replace floor boards on the second floor. The south rooms and hall on the first floor have new floors which were installed by the present owners. These floors were placed over an old, very rough sub-floor. The present owners also removed some of the previously built-in kitchen appliances and linoleum flooring which had been installed over what is now the kitchen floor. The paint colors were chosen by the present owners somewhat arbitrarily, but there is evidence that much of the woodwork was originally a dull

yellowish green which is seen in many early Saybrook houses. A number of different colors had been added over it. Some of the baseboards were originally dark red or brown.

Through the years the walls have been whitewashed, painted and covered with wallpaper at different times. An account book owned by the Old Saybrook Historical Society shows a charge to Capt. David Newell in 1795 for whitewashing his rooms.

The transfers of the property indicate that the lot for the house and the number of auxiliary buildings has varied through the years. At present there are no outbuildings at all, but a small brown-shingled structure across the street was once located behind this house. In the 1950's it was moved across the street and made into a small house. Probate inventories, deeds and other papers are available and further careful study would probably reveal more facts about the Dr. Augustus Eliot House.

#### B. Historical Context:

Samuel Eliot and Augustus Eliot were the physician sons of Jared Eliot, himself a physician as well as large landowner, minister and iron works investor. Hearsay makes Samuel Eliot the builder of the house, but the Saybrook land records show that the land at the Neck Gate was conveyed from Samuel Clark to Augustus Eliot in 1745. A house was built on the land between then and 1749 when the same land was sold. The land records do not mention Samuel Eliot. Little is known of Augustus or Samuel Eliot aside from their being physicians and aside from their having graduated from Yale. That they both died in their twenties afforded little time for accomplishment.

The father, Jared Eliot, as mentioned above had a variety of occupations. He was the son of Joseph Eliot and Mary Wyllys Eliot. Mary Wyllys was the daughter of Governor Wyllys of Connecticut. Jared Eliot was the subject of a book published in 1968 entitled Jared Eliot, Doctor, Minister, Scientist and his Connecticut by Dr. Herbert Thoms of Stony Creek. A lifelong trustee of Yale, Jared Eliot was described by Dr. Thoms as Yale's "first fund raiser". For a man of his strong Puritan ties he shook the traditional Yale Congregational support by asking for Anglican support. He persuaded Bishop Berkeley, as an Anglican church proponent to donate books and scholarship funds to Yale.

Jared Eliot's interest in Anglicanism reflected more a philosophical breadth of vision than outright rebellion. A tolerance for new ideas and other philosophies he would have inherited from his grandfather, John Eliot. John Eliot came to the Massachusetts Bay Colony in 1631. He later became famous as the "Apostle to the Indians". His most famous work was a translation of the Bible into Algonquin; this required the construction of a whole new grammar.

From the Eliot family the house came under the ownership of a line of sea captains essentially of the same family beginning with Jabez Stow in 1749 and ending with its purchase in 1890 by Amy Butler. During the time of the

sea captains Old Saybrook prospered as a port in the expanding overseas trade. The location of the town at the mouth of the Connecticut River enabled its sea going Captains to prosper. Old Saybrook had a good location for expanding trade but it was limited by shifting sands shoals at the mouth of the river. Therefore its sea trade was limited to sailing ships of moderate size and draft.

Little is known of Jabez Stow's sea ventures but he did participate in the battle of Fort Trumbull during the Revolution. He is listed as a prisoner carried off by the British in Arnold's attack on New London, September 6, 1781. During the Revolution the famed silversmith, Elias Peltrean rented rooms from Jabez Stow after he fled Loyalist Long Island. Mary, the daughter of Jabez Stow, married David Newell, a sea captain whose activities are better documented. Newell's prosperity is evident in account books and town records. Several letters to his family establish his participation in Connecticut River Valley sea trade prosperity after 1789.

Newell's death at the hands of slaves on his sloop the Syren described by the American Consul in the Cape Verde Islands shows that he took part in the slave trade known by some historians as the triangular trade. Mary Ann Newell, his daughter, married John Bushnell referred to as Captain John Bushnell in Tully's account books. Little is known of the Bushnell family who occupied the house until its sale to Amy Butler in 1890.

However, during the Bushnell occupancy Old Saybrook underwent a major transformation which was to permanently change its identity. In 1871 the Valley Railroad from Hartford to Fenwick was completed. Old Saybrook joined other towns in the newfound pleasure of sea bathing as a summer evocation and pastime. Newport, Rhode Island was the best known. Manufacturers of the enormous profits from expanding corporations and financial institutions after the Civil War had leisure time for new pleasures and the money for creating them. Fenwick became the focal point of importance in Old Saybrook. Yachting replaced sea trade; pleasure replaced work in the summer. Those who lived outside Fenwick either emulated the Fenwick people or worked for them. A succession of owners of means but without firm roots in Old Saybrook lived in the house after 1890. One characteristic which they must have had in common was respect for its antiquity and the means to perpetuate its character.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: This is an 18th century colonial house, substantially unchanged since it was built. It is an aesthetically pleasing example of a two-chimney, center-hall house. Its proportions, style and decorative elements are indicative of its rich and educated owners.
2. Condition of fabric: Excellent.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Overall dimensions: The main house is approximately 38 ft. wide by 32 ft. deep and the north ell is approximately 16½ ft. by 20 ft. The front porch is 3 ft. by 7 ft. and the side one is 10 ft. by 13 ft. It is 2½ stories high, ell-shaped with a 5-bay facade on the street.
2. Foundations: A low foundation of coursed fieldstone is topped with a plain wood water table. There is a bulkhead entrance with new steel doors to the basement on the north side.
3. Walls: Clapboards with plain edges, and plain corner boards. Clapboard replacements have been made as needed through the years, but some very old ones remain. The walls are now painted blue.
4. Structural system: Braced frame, post and beam, all wood with the exception of replacement beams in the basement which are steel. The standard post, joist, etc. arrangement is used.
5. Porches: On the east side is a screened-in porch with a door to yard and a door into the house. This porch was added in the 1950's. There is a one-bay entrance porch on the south (front) with brownstone steps and floor. Two square columns (new or replacement) support a one story gable roof which projects from the front of the building as far as the top step. The tops of the columns, the cornice under the porch roof and its gable end are trimmed with dentile. The front porch is painted white.
6. Chimneys: Two interior chimneys with corbeled caps extend through the roof ridge. They are brick and are painted white with black trim.
7. Openings:
  - a. Doorways and doors: The main entrance is the center bay on the south side. The wooden door has four panels each of which is surrounded by a moulding. It also has a new brass knocker and a large earlier iron door handle with decorative cups. Above the door is a wooden imitation of a fanlight. Four sidelights with a wooden panel at the bottom flank the sides of the doorway. A pilaster is outside the sidelights as if to echo the columns which hold up the front part of the porch roof. The threshold is one step above the porch floor and the trim surrounding the opening shows evidence of hinges used for another door. The door

from the side porch and its hardware is similar to the front door and is surrounded by plain trim. The door from the outside to the kitchen on the west side is modern with nine lights in the top half. The door to the ell is a sliding garage door. Aluminium storm/screen doors have been added over the porch and kitchen doors.

- b. Windows: All windows have a plain exterior trim and the sill projects only slightly. Most windows in the main house have 12 over 12 lights and double hung sash. Exceptions are the kitchen, bathroom, upstairs hall and attic. The more modern windows in the ell have 6 over 12 lights in double hung sash. Some old glass still remains in the main house. All windows are now covered with aluminium frame storm/screen windows painted blue to match the house walls.

8. Roof:

- a. Shape, covering: The main house has a gable roof with a steep pitch. The front porch has a gable roof, the side porch a hip roof and the ell a gambrel roof. All are wood-shingled.
- b. Cornice: A rather simple cyma-reversa moulding over a plain narrow frieze forms the main cornice and cornice returns. It also follows the line of the gables and is closely imitated by the more modern moulding on the ell. Metal gutters and drainpipes run along the front cornice and the back of the ell.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plans:

- a. First floor: The main house has a central hall floor plan with two rooms on each side. The central hall is entered from the south facade of the house and now extends only as far as the south wall of the northeast room making that room larger than the others. Storage closets fill the spaces to the east and west of each chimney. A powder room has recently been added to the center of the north side of the house. The first floor of the ell on the north is an unfinished garage. The steps to the basement are located where the ell joins the main house. The south rooms and the northwest room are approximately 15 ft. by 15 ft., the hall is 7 ft. by 20 ft. and the northeast room is 21 ft. by 15 ft. plus chimney spaces and closets. The stairs ascend in the center hall from south to north.
- b. Second floor: The second floor plan was once probably almost like the first floor. The main house now has two chambers on the south side and one on the northeast corner. What would have been the northwest chamber has been remodeled into two bedrooms and a closet. Another bath has been installed to the east of the east chimney with access from the southeast chamber. The south part of the central hall was be closed off from the north part of the hall and is now a separate room. Closets fill spaces beside the chimneys. The stairs to the attic are directly over the stairs from the first floor to the second floor and access to them

is gained through a door in the north hall. Directly over the basement stairs, another stairway goes between the first and second floors. The ell contains a bedroom, bathroom and closet.

2. Stairways: The single flight stairway from the first to the second floor is enclosed, except for the bottom three open steps which have a closed string, handrail and turned balusters. The large turned newel post is probably 19th century. Panelled pilasters rise against the stairwell walls, perpendicular to the tread of the fourth step. They are connected overhead by a wooden archway which frames the closed portion of the stairwell. The plaster work overhead beside the wooden archway imitates one half of a groined vault. There are thirteen risers and a small moulding under the nosing on each step. A wooden handrail supported by 24 plain balusters and a small newel runs along the floor at the top of the well enclosing the stairs.

The stairs from the second floor to the attic are enclosed and access to them is through a door in the north hall on the second floor. They are directly over the first floor stairway. However, there are four winders at the bottom, six steps to a landing and two more steps to the top.

A very steep, fully enclosed single flight stairway in the ell runs outside the north wall of the kitchen to the ell bedroom. Directly beneath this is the very simple, open stairway to the basement. Both of these stairways are

3. Flooring: Several types of flooring are now in the house as repairs have been necessary as floors wore out over the years. On the first floor south rooms the present owners have installed new, 12 inch wide pine boards with reproduction rose-headed nails. Under this there is still a rough sub-flooring of thick boards which is quite old, but would never have been used for the finished floors. The northeast room has narrow hardwood flooring probably installed earlier in the 20th century. In the kitchen the present owners have removed a linoleum flooring to reveal the present floor; a slightly rough, hardwood boards about 4 inches wide. From the basement the first floor joists are clearly visible.

On the second floor most of the rooms in the main house have pine floor boards ranging in width from 6 in. to 15 in., held in place with square-headed and rose-headed nails. They all show evidence of having been painted grey at an earlier time although they are now finished with oil end varnish. Some of the boards are replacements which have been brought from the attic, including a clearly defined square in the center of the southwest chamber. There are floors of narrow hardwood boards in some of the closets and in the ell and carpeting and linoleum in the bathrooms. On the second floor there are several different types of thresholds and the floors are at several different levels. Detailed study by experts will certainly reveal exactly when the floors were replaced as well as other facts about their construction. In the northeast chamber spaces between the boards make it possible to see with a flashlight, the floor joists and the ceiling plaster on the room below.

There are still many original floorboards in the attic along with a number of new boards.

4. Wall and ceiling finish: Most of the walls are now painted white and on many walls the paint has been applied over wallpaper. As far as is known, all of the walls were originally plaster and a great deal of the original plaster still remains. Removal of small pieces of plaster by the present owners has revealed hand cut lath in many walls. Where walls have been added to make bathrooms and closets, modern construction methods have been used.

Original or very early plaster ceilings remain in a number of rooms but modern plasterboard and/or a thin coat of new plaster has been used in the south rooms on the second floor and the southeast and northwest rooms on the first floor.

5. Openings:

- a. Doorways and doors: Most of the doors on the first floor have six panels in three tiers and the overall measurements are approximately 6 ft. 10 in. by 32 in. All of these doors are pegged, mortise and tenon construction, about 1 in. thick. Placement and proportion of panels are similar to those suggested on page 78 of Asher Benjamin's American Builders Companion. A very small mould surrounds each panel on the room side of the doors, with a plain moulded panel projecting on the other side. On some of the doors the panel is thin end fluted and surrounded by a mould on both sides. Removal of a small section of this moulding has revealed that it is attached with old finishing nails about 1 in. long which are invisible on the surface of the finished door.

On the second floor the door from the south hall to the southwest chamber is also of this type.

Most of the other doors on the second floor are several inches smaller than those on the first floor and appear to be older. These old doors for the most part have five moulded panels in three tiers (2 vertical on top, 1 horizontal near the middle and 2 vertical on the bottom) and are pegged, mortise and tenon construction. Some modern reproduction doors have been installed on new bathrooms and closets, copying the panel arrangement.

All doorways have architrave trim, but not of the same sizes and designs. Generally, the first floor doorways are more elaborate than those on the second floor. Where new doorways have been added, the trim approximately copies the old trim remaining in the room, but its newness is generally obvious.

- b. Windows: Most of the windows in the house are double hung sash with 12 over 12 lights, approximately 6½ in. by 8½ in., with some old panes. The top sash is stationary while the lower sash slides up and down and can be held at different heights by a spring catch on the jamb. Sash corners are pegged, mortise and tenon. Muntins vary slightly in different rooms - some are plain and some moulded. The basic window arrangement is that which is typical in an 18th century two-chimney house and the new windows are quite obvious: bathrooms, kitchen, all, etc.

In the main house the second floor windows all have a similar architrave trim, narrow sill and simple moulded apron. An awkward wooden cornice which was made in the 1960's still remains at the tops of some of the windows. On the first floor the architrave trim is more elaborate and the top of the chair rail or wainscot forms the sill.

6. Decorative features and trim (room by room):

- e. Entrance Hall on the First floor: Delicately carved 1 in. modillion brackets rest on the bed moulding of a wooden cornice which surrounds the room. This cornice which tops all except the main doorway well expresses the character of the house. The builder and joiner have created an aesthetically pleasing room which welcomes the entering visitor to this spacious and comfortable house. Entering from the front door one faces the stairs and doorway to the northeast room while looking into the southwest room on the left and the southeast room on the right, so that almost the entire first floor is immediately visible, and open to view.

A skirting board topped with a base mould goes around the floor and up the stairwall. All woodwork is now painted a dull green and the walls are white.

- b. The northeast room on the first floor: This room is entered from the entrance hall. On the south wall is a fireplace which has a rectangular opening framed by Doric columns supporting a frieze with 12 carved triglyphs. Above the frieze is a cornice which also forms the mantel shelf. A paneled wainscot is on all walls and is 31 in. from the floor in some places and 26 in. from the floor in other places. The different heights of wainscot, some flat pilasters and other irregularities make it appear to be at least partially a later addition. One possibility is that the western portion of the room was once a continuation of the center hallway. A moulded cornice is on the entire south wall above the fireplace. A doorway on the east wall leads onto the porch. The woodwork is now painted a dull green and the walls have been covered with a neutral beige wallpaper.
- c. The southwest room on the first floor: It is to the left of the entrance hall when one enters the house. The fireplace is located on the north wall. The opening is framed with plain pegged boards over which have been placed two round fluted pilasters supporting a plain frieze. The simply moulded mantel shelf has dentile underneath it.

The composition of the fireplace is such that it draws attention upward to the wooden cornice which is the most striking decorative feature in the room. It projects about 4 in. from the wall and about 5 in. down from the ceiling and extends along the north wall. Curved brackets,  $1\frac{1}{2}$  in. wide rest on the bed mould and curl outward to support the upper part of the cornice. An open space between the back of the brackets and the solid part of the cornice creates a light, airy feeling. A similar bracket and cornice is shown in figure D, page 26 of Asher Benjamin's American Builder's Companion. It is interesting to note that the cornice in the Eliot House does not follow Benjamin's suggestions for proportion nor his recommendation that this motif be used for an aave cornice, but is nevertheless a very successful.

There is a metal loop for holding a crane inside the fireplace and the probate inventory of Jabez Stow, Sr., in 1787 mentions a crane in the west room, with a weight of 3 lbs.

A chair rail surrounds the room, forming the sill and apron under the window. It is moulded, about  $3\frac{1}{2}$  in. wide and the top is 31 in. from the floor. A skirting board is at the bottom of all walls, projects about 1 in. from the plaster walls and is topped by a base mould about  $2\frac{1}{2}$  in. high. Corner posts covered with beaded boards extend into the south corners of the room. All woodwork is now painted a dark, bright blue and the walls are white.

- d. The southeast room on the first floor: It is entered by a doorway across the hallway from the door to the southwest room and is its equal in size and placement of features. The chair rail and baseboard echo those in the southwest room. Wooden bookcases and cupboards are mid-20th century additions covering the west wall. A moulded cornice without dentils or brackets is at the top of all walls and was moved forward to trim the bookshelves when they were added. In the southeast corner is the corner post cased in beaded boards.

The fireplace on the north wall has a rectangular opening framed by simple moulded pilasters without entasis, above which is a frieze with a central panel outlined by a thin moulding. The cornice forms the mantel shelf and just below it runs a moulding which appears to be made up of short pieces of vertically placed reeding. Inside the opening is a black cast iron fire frame with a semi-circular hearth. It is framed with reeded and fluted pilasters on a plinth decorated with a sunburst. East pilaster is topped with a Roman lamp. The frieze is between the pilasters, not on top of them. It is decorated with floral and urn motifs and in the center is set: "Isaac Potts, 1795".

Isaac Potts owned the forge at Valley Forge, Pennsylvania and in 1795 Captain David Newell, who lived in the house was engaged in coastal and Atlantic trade. Correspondence with the Pottstown Historical Society and Valley Forge indicates that there is no other fire frame exactly like this one. It is also possible that this fire frame may have been made at Isaac Potts' furnace in New Jersey, which he started in 1793 and called Martha's Furnace.

The woodwork is now painted a deep blue and the walls are white.

- e. The north hall on the second floor: It is entered from the main stairway. A skirting board topped with a base mould is identical to that in the first floor entrance hall and along the stairwell. A corner post in the northwest corner is covered with beaded boards. The small triangular piece of wall which encloses the stairs to the attic is moulded wood panelling conforming to the slope of the stairs. From inside the stairwell the back of the panelling can be seen as well as the chamfered corner post and wide planking. All woodwork is now painted gold.
- f. The south hall on the second floor: It has a baseboard on the north, south, and east walls which is plain with a bead on top. On the west wall it is more modern with a flat, aquara top. The entire west wall appears to be an addition because narrow tongue and groove vertical boarding still shows around the doorway to the west bedroom. The corner post in the southwest corner is flared and covered with beaded boards.
- g. The southwest chamber on the second floor: It has a simple baseboard with plaster work brought to the top of it. Corner posts in the southeast and southwest corners are flared and covered with beaded boards. The fireplace on the north wall, in a projecting chimney breast has a rectangular opening. It is surrounded by plain padded boards over which a simple architrave trim has been added. A four inch mantel shelf tops a simple cornice and plain frieze. About 30 in. above the mantel is evidence of a plate covering the hole formerly used for a stove pipe. All woodwork is now painted light blue.
- h. The southeast chamber on the second floor: It has a wooden baseboard at the bottom of all walls and two corner posts in the south corner which are covered with beaded boards. The fireplace on the north wall has a rectangular opening with a simple architrave trim. The frieze which is flush with the wall is decorated with a series of five flutes each, underneath a simple mantel shelf. All woodwork is painted an olive green and the walls are papered.
- i. The northeast chamber on the second floor: This has been changed to accommodate a bathroom and the fireplace has been walled in. Corner posts in the north corners are extremely flared and covered with beaded boards. All woodwork is painted a deep blue.
- j. Other rooms (kitchen, all, bathrooms): They are more modern or have been modernized and are not described here in detail. All of these rooms do contain remnants, such as the small piece of chair rail and skirting board in the kitchen, which substantiate the basic fabric of the structure.
- k. Attic: It is the full size of the main house and is extremely interesting because the whole structure of the house is evident here. Along the stairs to the attic one can see a large gunstock post and wide planks. Many old floorboards and rafters remain. The rafters

are numbered with Roman numerals and pegged to the like numbered beam. Some old planking remains on the roof and end walls. The tops of the chimneys here are brick and they are chamfered slightly to go through the center of the gable. There is a fireplace on the west side of the east chimney. An open stairway without risers ascends to the roof beside the east chimney, to the spot where there was originally a trap door. New work on the southeast side is that which was done to repair damage from the 1938 hurricane.

1. Basement: There is a cement floored basement under the entire main house and the present sill beams were installed in the 1950's. The stonework around the walls is old. There are two stone foundations for the chimneys, the one on the west having been filled in to accommodate the furnace flue. The cradles supporting the hearths on the south sides of each chimney are still there, but those on the north sides have been replaced. All the stone work has been repaired recently and there are many new floor joists and beams, including new supporting beams of steel.
6. Notable hardware: All interior doors are now fitted with iron HL hinges and cast iron Suffolk latches with heart cusp. Nearly all are 20th century reproductions except for some hinges on the second floor on which leather washers are still in place (northeast chamber, north bath and south hall). All old doors have shadows of previously installed hardware. Removal of one of the present HL hinges from a first floor door revealed indications of an earlier butt hinge. The butt hinge and door knob would have been more appropriate to the first floor doors if we are correct in our assumption that they were installed in the late 18th or early 19th century.

Nails are the most interesting hardware feature now existing in the house. Examples of many types still exist. An old hand-wrought nail about 2 inches long was removed from an exterior clapboard which in accordance with Kelly's book establishes the 18th century origin of some of the clapboards. Finishing nails are mentioned above in connection with doors and throughout the house, many nails are evident and easily removable for further study.

7. Mechanical equipment:

- a. Heating: There are six remaining fireplaces in the house, including the one in the attic and three more have been covered with new walls. All the fireplaces which are open are in good working order and those on the first floor have been fitted with dampers. The one in the first floor southeast room has a fire frame in it, but all the others have brick backs, stone lintels, sides and hearths. Measurements of the rooms, the fireplaces, the base of the chimneys and the attic sections of the chimneys indicate that there are no radically different fireplaces or large ovens under the present ones.

Radiators and hot water heater were installed in the 1950's.

- b. Plumbing: Two bathtubs with claw and ball feet and two wall hung sinks with large porcelain splashboards are of mild interest as bathroom fixtures.

D. Site:

1. General setting and orientation: The house occupies a site at what is now designated 500 Main Street. This is also Connecticut State Route 154. The house is on the north side of the street and faces it. The property has about 200 feet of frontage on the street, the house is approximately in the center and is set back about 40 feet. The part of the site which is high land is nearly level and is a square lot of about one acre. From the back of the high land another acre of tidal marsh extends from the back of the lawn to the North Cove, a part of the Connecticut River. The marsh is a pie-shaped piece. The total property now belonging to the house is slightly more than two acres and through the years the house lot has varied from 13 to 2 acres.

At the present time there is a high hedge between the house and the street and shubbery and trees separate it from the houses on either side. Most of the high land is lawn with scattered flower gardens and small trees. To the northeast of the house there is a stone well without a cover and a flat piece of brownstone said to be a grave. It seems unlikely that a grave would have been placed next to the water supply but there is some brickwork underground which should be investigated further.

The early land records indicate that there were barns, gardens and an orchard on the property and even as late as the 20th century there have been grape arbors, rose gardens and other types of gardens.

PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

A. Maps:

Saybrook and Old Saybrook, surveyed and drawn by E.M. Woodford and published by Richard Clark, Philadelphia, 1853

Middlesex County, Connecticut from surveys under direction of H.F. Walling, 1859, published by H. and C.T. Smith and Company, New York

The so-called Cheeseborough Map, owned by the Old Saybrook Historical Society, 350 Main Street, Old Saybrook, Connecticut

Atlas of Middlesex County by F.W. Beers, 1874

B. Interviews:

Conversations with various people in Old Saybrook including Mrs. Agnes Gref, Miss Ethel Day, Mr. J. Whittier Anderson, and Mrs. Alice Beebe

C. Early Views:

A number of old photographs and postcards have been given to the present owners of the house. Additional pictures are in the files of the Old Saybrook Historical Society, but none are earlier than about 1915. The Society's address is 350 Main Street, Old Saybrook, Connecticut.

D. Bibliography:

1. Primary and unpublished sources:

Land records and other pertinent information in the office of the Town Clerk, Old Saybrook, Connecticut

Historical and genealogical materials in the Connecticut State Library, Hartford, Connecticut: The Barbour Collection of town vital statistics, Church records, family bible records, probate records, microfilmed land records and probate records of Saybrook, Guilford and Middletown

Historical and technical information in regard to the Newell House (Eliot House), compiled by the Society of Colonial Dames, January 23, 1913. Original copy in the Connecticut State Library, Hartford.

Original church records in the First Congregational Church, Old Saybrook, Connecticut. These records are kept in the church office

Elias Tully's account book owned by the Old Saybrook Historical Society, 350 Main Street, Old Saybrook, Connecticut

Correspondence to and from Capt. David Newell owned by the Old Saybrook Historical Society, 350 Main Street, Old Saybrook, Connecticut

Correspondence with the National Archives and Records Service, Washington, D.C., carried on by Old Saybrook Preservation Society

Collection material of Mr. Thomas Stevens, Deep River, Connecticut

Connecticut Colonial records (its location not indicated)

Collection material, Old Saybrook Historical Society, 350 Main Street, Old Saybrook, Connecticut

Additional information on this house prepared by Joseph Ames and Priscilla M. Thompson, owners, to run with the deed when the house is sold.

2. Secondary and published sources:

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Warch, Richard. School of the Prophets. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1973

Winslow, Olsa Elizabeth. John Eliot, Apostle to the Indians. Boston, Massachusetts: Houghton, Mifflin Company, 1968

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